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U.N. nuclear watchdog reports Iran experimented with "two-point implosion" warhead designed to fit on smaller missiles, demands explanation;

*Kirk: "Negotiations with Iran in the absence of effective sanctions have failed."*

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), co-chair of the bipartisan House Iran Working Group and a Navy Reserve intelligence officer, today called on President Obama to form an international coalition to cut off gasoline deliveries to Iran in response to the regime's rejection of a compromise nuclear deal, its reported testing of a nuclear warhead design and its decision today to charge three American hostages with espionage.

"It is time for the Obama Administration to recognize that negotiations with Iran in the absence of effective sanctions have failed," said Kirk, the architect of legislation to restrict gasoline deliveries to Iran. "As Congress moves forward with the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act (H.R. 2194), the President should convene a meeting with key European, Gulf and Asian allies to discuss the immediate suspension of gasoline deliveries to Iran."

Two weeks ago, Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - the United Nations' nuclear watchdog - that it would not accept a compromise offered by European and American diplomats to send its low-enriched uranium to Russia for further reprocessing.

Over the weekend, the Guardian newspaper reported on a secret IAEA report that concluded Iran tested components of a "two-point implosion" warhead. Two-point implosion devices are easier to develop than conventional warheads and are designed to fit on smaller missiles.

Earlier today, Iran charged three U.S. citizens held hostage since July with espionage. The three, Shane Bauer, 27, Sarah Shourd, 31, and Josh Fattal, 27, reportedly wandered into Iran from Iraq during a hiking expedition.

"For diplomacy to succeed, Iran must come to the bargaining table in economic pain," Kirk said. "To avoid military action and stop the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran, President Obama should work to cut off Iran's gasoline supply in the next 90 days."

Despite its status as a top oil exporter, Iran remains dependent on imports of gasoline for 25-40 percent of its supply.

In 2005 and again in 2006, Congressman Kirk introduced resolutions calling for a multilateral restriction of gasoline deliveries to Iran as the most effective economic sanction to bring Iran's leaders into compliance with their commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In 2007, Kirk authored the Iran Sanctions Enhancement Act, which extended current U.S. sanctions to the provision of gasoline to Iran. The legislation was reintroduced earlier this year and later incorporated into H.R. 2194, recently passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

In June, Kirk successfully offered an amendment to the State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Act prohibiting U.S. Export-Import Bank financing for any company involved in providing gasoline to Iran - the first gasoline sanction to pass the House of Representatives.

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